meeting of the ASEAN-India Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (AIJSCC) was held at Bali (Indonesia) from 6—8 January, 1994 and cooperation in identified sectors of trade, investment, science and technology and tourism was given a new content and direction.

When APEC was launched as a regional consultative forum in 1989, it was restricted to some of the littoral states of the Pacific Ocean and excluded any non-Pacific rim country and in that context, India. At the 3rd Ministerial Conference in Seoul in 1991, India officially indicated its interest in participating in the activities of the APEC. At the APEC Seattle Summit in 1993 a decision was taken to freeze the membership of APEC till 1997. There is, therefor no possibility of any consideration of an Indian membership of APEC during this period. However India would be able to be associated with some of the work programmes of APEC of priority interest to us.

Ultimately it is the growing strength of the Indian economy and its increasing importance as a market as well as investment destination alongwith strengthening of relationship between India and ASEAN on one hand, and between India and other members of APEC on the other, which could contribute to India's eventual membership of APEC.

Statements Jeopardising US-India relations

1067. SHRI INDER KUMAR GUJRAL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Ambassador of India in Washington has recently called on an official of the State Department to say that repeated statements by the American officials could "jeopardise U.S.—India relations" and

(b) whether Government have taken note of the recent statements made by these officials and if so, what are the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (Shri R. L. BHATIA) : (a) The Ambassador of India in Washington keeps in regular touch with officials of the State Department. In a meeting on 24 January, 1994 with the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affiairs, to convey Government's concern regarding President Clinton's letter to US Congressman Gary Condit about Punjab, Ambassador conveyed that negative pronouncements and communications by the US on such issues as Kashmir, human rights and Punjab could not but create difficulties and complicate India's sincere endeavour to develop a multi-faceted and positive relationship with the United States.

(b) Government have noted the remarks by Assistant Secretary Robin Raphel at a speech in Washington on 9 February, 1994 to the Asia Society wherein she compared "the civil war in Afghanistan" to the "insurgency in Kashmir". Ms. Raphel reiterated that the US believes that Kashmir is disputed territory and, as a practical matter, the people of Kashmir have to agree and accept any solution to the dispute as otherwise it would not be a stable solution. She said the history of this State is not necessarily the key to its future. It is a tortured history. When quesioned about how the views of the people of Kashmir would be ascertained, she said that the US does not have a formal view on how this should be done.

In an official statement on February 11, 1994, Government pointed out that no comparison can be made between the situation in Afghanistan and J & K. The former is a by-product of the Cold War whereas J & K has been facing a massive campaign of terrorism aided and abetted by Pakistan. The only link between Afghanistan and J & K is that weapons and mercenaries have moved from both Afghanistan and Pakistan in support of terrorism in J & K. Government hoped that the US Administration will recognize that Pakistan sponsored terrorism is the major obstacle in restoring peace and tranquillity in J & K. Repeated references lacking in balance and proper perspective regarding the situation in J & K by responsible US Administration officials tend to provide encourage ment to Pakistan and terrorists sustained by them to continue with their violent activities. Such references are unhelpful and hinder resumption of the democratic politcal process and a return to normalacy which the Government of India are striving to bring about.